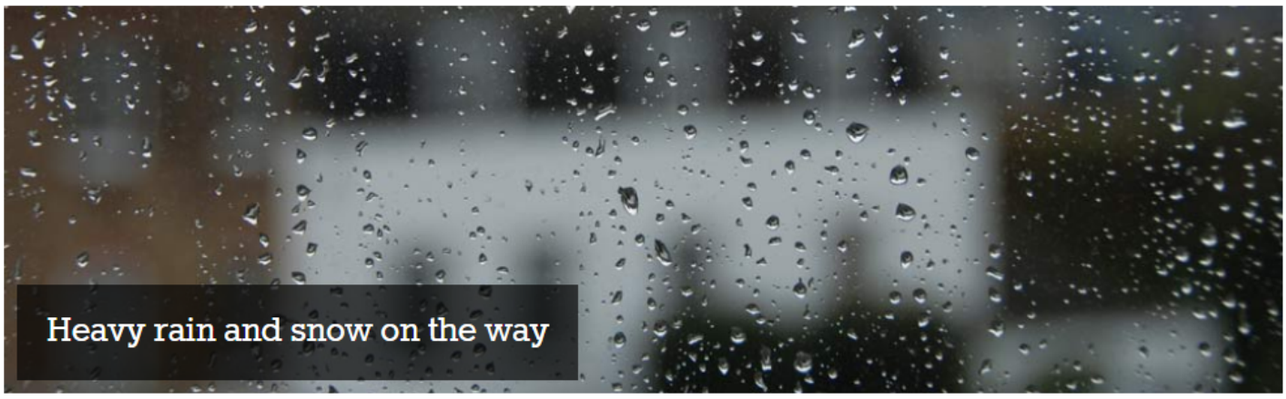

Heavy rain and snow on the way

20 March 2013 - Met Office forecasters are predicting more contrasting weather across the country as we head towards the end of the week.

So far this month we have seen some very cold weather and a brief warm spell across the UK, illustrating just how changeable March's weather can be.

Met Office forecasters are predicting more contrasting weather across the country as we head towards the end of the week.

After a slightly quieter period of weather today, an area of low pressure is expected to move in from the Atlantic during Thursday and Friday. This will give heavy rainfall for southern and south-western areas, with over 40 mm of rain is possible in places.

However, as the rain moves north-eastwards it will mix with cold air and has the potential to give as much as 20 to 30 cm of snow across parts of north Wales, northern England, south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland during Friday and Saturday.

Will Lang, Chief Forecaster at the Met Office, said: "While it is not unusual to see snow in March, the cold weather we have seen has been quite prolonged. The next period of wintry weather has some uncertainty at this stage regarding where the worst of the snow will be so it is essential to watch for updates to severe weather warnings.

"As always, we are working with different agencies to help keep Britain on the move, and to keep people safe and well. However, people should be prepared for further disruption as we head through the next few days."

A spokesman for the Scottish Government added: "Though we were enjoying record high temperatures around this time last year, we know that March normally brings us challenging weather conditions and this year is proving much more like the norm. Already this week our agencies and partners have dealt with Amber snow warnings across much of the country, and we continue to do all we can to ensure Scotland is prepared for any potential weather disruption.

"When the snow and storms hit, drivers can play their part by planning journeys in advance and using other forms of transport where available. Travellers should monitor Met Office forecasts and use the many other sources of information and advice to plan ahead, prepare well and stay safe."

Pete Fox, Environment Agency spokesperson, said: "Heavy rain in south west England and south Wales on Thursday and into Friday means there is a risk of localised surface water and river flooding in the south west, the southern counties and parts of south Wales. The public can sign up for flood warnings and check the latest information on the Environment Agency's website, or follow us on Twitter at @EnvAgency."

The unsettled weather looks set to continue into next week, with the north and east of the UK remaining very much on the cold side. Although temperatures in south-western parts of the country should be nearer to normal for a while, this may turn out to be short-lived.

As always, the latest forecasts and warnings can be found online, through our mobile apps and through TV and radio broadcasts.

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